

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI**

Re: Expanding Access to Broadband and Encouraging Innovation through Establishment of an Air-Ground Mobile Broadband Secondary Service for Passengers Aboard Aircraft in the 14.0-14.5 GHz Band, GN Docket No. 13-114, RM-11640.

One of my favorite comedians, Louis C.K. has a terrific bit where he jokes about sitting next to somebody on a plane who complains about the quality of the in-flight Wi-Fi.

The punch line was that it's ridiculous for someone to be complaining about technology when he is "sitting in a chair in the sky connecting to the Internet!"

While we like to think of ourselves as Louis C.K. in this anecdote – the person with some perspective and modest expectations – the reality is that we expect and often need to be able to get online 24/7, at home, in an office or on a plane. And four years after Louis C.K. first told that joke, those aren't unrealistic expectations.

With today's item, we take an important step to improve in-flight broadband service.

A little background.

There are two types of current in-flight broadband service: satellite-based and air-to-ground. Both are licensed by the FCC.

The satellite systems, known as Earth Stations Aboard Aircraft, use satellite antennas installed on the top of planes to communicate with satellite space stations.

This service, operated by multiple licensees, shares 1 GHz of spectrum among the licensees and with many other Fixed-Satellite Service operators.

Air-to-ground systems deliver in-flight broadband through a ground-based network that communicates with an antenna on the bottom of a plane, which connects to an onboard Wi-Fi system providing service throughout the cabin.

The current air-ground licensee operates with just 4 MHz in the 800 MHz band.

This item is focused on meeting the growing demand for in-flight broadband by freeing up spectrum for use for air-to-ground services.

Of course, identifying new spectrum for new uses has been an FCC priority for the past several years.

We've worked to free up spectrum for use with traditional auctions. We've worked to reallocate spectrum for mobile broadband from both commercial and government bands, and we've worked to share spectrum where reallocation isn't possible. We've removed regulatory barriers to terrestrial and other flexible spectrum use. We've cleared new bands for mobile broadband. And we've freed up unlicensed spectrum for dynamic use.

By freeing up 30 MHz in the WCS band and 40 MHz in the AWS-4 band, in addition to 10 MHz we'll auction in the H-Block and spectrum that will be freed up by innovative new policies like incentive auctions and spectrum sharing in the 3.5 GHz band, the Commission is on track to exceed its goal of unleashing 300 MHz for broadband by 2015.

Increasing the availability of spectrum – and hitting the long-term goal of 500 MHz by 2020 will require a great deal of ongoing work.

The game is certainly worth the candle because a robust mobile ecosystem will drive economic growth, job creation, and our country's global competitiveness.

Today's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking would free up, for secondary use, 500 megahertz of spectrum, for a new Air-Ground Mobile Broadband service.

So we would be going for 4 megahertz of spectrum for air-to-ground to 504 megahertz.

This service would help meet consumer demand by offering airline passengers access to better in-flight broadband and will increase competitive pressure on current systems to improve the quality of their in-flight services.

Specifically, the proposal could provide broadband capacity of up to 300 gigabits per second on a combined basis. This will enable business and leisure travelers aboard aircraft in the United States to be more productive and have more choices in entertainment, communications, and social media, and it could lower prices.

Today's proposal is also designed to ensure protection for existing commercial and federal users in this band.

Namely, Fixed-Satellite Service (FSS) licensees in the 14.0-14.5 GHz band provide critical operations for the U.S. media, banking, retail, and transportation sectors and have a long and effective history of spectrum sharing and coordination.

These licensees will continue to have primary rights and protection from interference from this secondary service.

The record to date suggests that spatial diversity will allow coexistence, and that this would be a strongly beneficial and efficient use of spectrum.

Of course, the Commission will expect engagement from all stakeholders to help identify appropriate safeguards to protect current and future FSS operations, as well as federal users in the band.

And we need to continue to facilitate forward-thinking proposals like this one that help move us toward more efficient and productive use of our limited spectrum resources.

Today's Notice demonstrates how technology and innovation are enabling new solutions to meet spectrum demand, while protecting incumbent users.

I thank Kate Dumouchel, Renee Gregory, Michael Steffen, and the terrific teams in IB, WTB, and OET for their work on this item.